

Message Text

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SUBJECT: THE INSURGENCY IN THAILAND -- ANTICIPATED CT
DRY-SEASON OFFENSIVE HAS NOT YET MATERIALIZED

SUMMARY: COMMUNIST TERRORIST (CT) ACTIVITY IN NORTH AND NORTHEAST THAILAND INCREASED, BUT NOT SIGNIFICANTLY, WITH THE ONSET OF THE DRY SEASON. IN THE SOUTH, WHERE THE RAINY SEASON SET IN DURING THE LAST QUARTER OF 1975, CT OPERATIONS WERE GENERALLY AT A LOW LEVEL. RTG COUNTER-INSURGENCY INITIATIVES IN THE SURAT THANI/NAKHON SI THAMMARAT BORDER AREA WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE VIOLENT INCIDENTS REPORTED IN THE SOUTH. CT OPERATIONAL EMPHASIS APPEARS TO BE ON POLITICAL NON-VIOLENT ACTIVITIES WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF WIDENING THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE BASE. THE EXPECTED CT DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE HAS NOT YET MATERIALIZED, BUT MAY STILL BE LAUNCHED IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THIS MESSAGE REPORTS ISOC'S VIEWS ON THE FAILURE OF THE CPT TO COUNT AN OFFENSIVE. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH THE DRY SEASON WELL ADVANCED IN THE NORTH AND NORTHEASTERN REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY, THERE STILL HAS BEEN NO DRAMATIC UPSURGE IN COMMUNIST-INITIATED VIOLENT MILITARY INCIDENTS. THERE HAS BEEN A DEFINITE INCREASE IN CT MILITARY ACTIVITY, PARTICULARLY IN DECEMBER OF 1975 BUT THE INCREASE IS NOT PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT WHEN COMPARED TO SIMILAR PERIODS IN THE
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PAST.

2. IN THE SOUTH, WHERE THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT (RTG) IS FACED WITH A COMPLEXITY OF SECURITY AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS, COMMUNIST TERRORIST OPERATIONS WERE GENERALLY AT A LOW LEVEL THROUGHOUT THE REGION. THE EXCEPTION WAS FOUND IN SURAT THANI PROVINCE WHERE RTG FORCES WERE OPERATING AGAINST CT POSITIONS, AND A NUMBER OF CLASHES HAVE RESULTED AS THE COMMUNISTS REACTED TO RTG INITIATIVES. THIS ACTIVITY TOOK PLACE PRINCIPALLY IN THE AREA BETWEEN THE MOUNTAINS ALONG THE EASTERN BORDER AND THE STRETCH OF RAILROAD BETWEEN BAN NA SAN AND WIENG SA DISTRICT TOWNS.

3. THE PACE AND SCOPE OF THE INSURGENCY IN NORTH AND NORTHEASTERN THAILAND REMAINS, AS IT HAS FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, SLOW IN TERMS OF BREAKING OUT FROM ITS MOUNTAIN-ORIENTED BASES AND RESTRICTED IN TAKING OVER NEW TERRITORY AND POPULATION. SCATTERED INCIDENTS OF VARYING INTENSITY WERE REPORTED THROUGHOUT BOTH REGIONS DURING THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 1975 THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF JANUARY 1976 WITH NO SIGNIFICANT TRENDS DISCERNABLE.

4. THE ANTICIPATED COMMUNIST DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE HAS NOT AS YET MATERIALIZED, BUT CAN STILL BE INITIATED DURING THE REMAINING FIVE MONTHS OF THE DRY SEASON. THAI OFFICIALS IN THE INTERNAL SECURITY OPERATIONS COMMAND (ISOC) ARE SPECULATING THAT THERE COULD BE AT LEAST THREE REASONS FOR THE FAILURE OF THE CT TO SUSTAIN THEIR LARGE-SCALE ATTACKS FIRST LAUNCHED IN JULY AND AUGUST OF 1975. FIRST, THEY BELIEVE THAT COMMUNIST CHINA IS BRAKING THE INSURGENCY DUE TO THAI POLITICAL INITIATIVES WITH PEKING AND PEKING IS RESPONDING BY LESSENING ITS INSURGENCY SUPPORT; ANOTHER THEORY POSTULATES A SPLIT IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND (CPT) WITH THE NEWER ETHNIC-THAI CPT CADRE LOOKING TOWARDS NORTH VIETNAM/USSR AS THE DYNAMIC REVOLUTIONARY MODEL TO FOLLOW RATHER THAN PEKING AND THUS THERE HAS DEVELOPED A CONFRONTATION

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BETWEEN THE OLD-LINE SINO THAI LEADERS IN THE PARTY AND THEIR THAI COLLEAGUES; THE LAST THEORY CONCERNS THE NATURE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE 150-200-MAN CT ATTACKS MOUNTED DURING JULY AND AUGUST OF 1975. GENERAL SAIYUT KERDPHON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF ISOC, SURMISES THAT THESE LARGE SCALE VENTURES WERE TRIAL AND PROBING ATTACKS DESIGNED TO ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE MORALE OF RTG SECURITY FORCES BUT THEY FAILED IN THIS AND

ALSO TOOK UNACCEPTABLE CT CASUALTIES IN THE PROCESS
AND THEREFORE HAVE GIVEN UP THIS TACTIC.

5. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO HARD EVIDENCE TO EITHER CONFIRM OR DENY THE THAI SPECULATIONS LISTED IN PARA 4 ABOVE. ON THE SURFACE WE SEE NO CHANGE IN PEKING'S EXTERNAL SUPPORT TO THE MOVEMENT, WITH BOTH PEKING AND HANOI CONTINUING THEIR TRADITIONAL SUPPORT. ISOC IS BASING ITS CPT SPLIT THEORY MAINLY ON THE LACK OF A CPT CENTRAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT THIS YEAR COMMEMORATING THE 33RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE CPT AND ON THE FACT THAT NO CPT INTERNAL CELEBRATIONS WERE HELD THIS YEAR BY THE CPT TO MARK THE EVENT. THEY READ THESE NEGATIVE EVENTS AS INDICATING A SPLIT WITHIN THE CPT CENTRAL COMMITTEE ITSELF WITH ONE FACTION CONTINUING TO LEAN IN PEKING'S DIRECTION AND THE OTHER GRAVITATING TOWARDS THE NVA/USSR. IN OUR VIEW, IT IS STILL RELATIVELY EARLY IN THE DRY SEASON TO WRITE OFF THE POSSIBLE RENEWAL OF CT LARGE SCALE ATTACKS AGAINST RTG WEAK TARGETS, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE HAVE VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE TO BACK UP STATEMENTS THAT THE CT TOOK QUOTE UNACCEPTABLE UNQUOTE CASUALTIES IN THEIR INITIAL MASSED ATTACKS. WE ARE PURSUING THE THAI THEORIES RAISED IN PARA 4 ABOVE BOTH WITH THEM AND UNILATERALLY AND WILL FORWARD ANY EVIDENCE OR LACK THEREOF THAT EITHER CONFIRMS OR NEGATES THESE INTERESTING PRECEPTS. MASTERS

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